

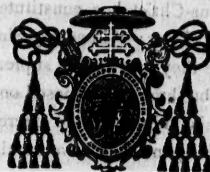
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PASTORAL LETTER

FOR THE

Promulgation of the Second Council of the Ecclesiastical Province of Canada.



CHARLES FRANCOIS BAILLARGEON,

Bishop of
Quebec, Administrator of the Diocese of Quebec, &c., &c.

To the Secular and Regular Clergy, to the Religious Communities, and to all the Faithful in this Diocese, greeting and blessing in Our Lord Jesus-Christ.

Already eighteen months have elapsed, Dearly Beloved Brethren, since the Bishops of this Province assembled together in this metropolis, in the presence of God, and under the presidency of your Illustrious Archbishop and most worthy Pastor, to hold the second Provincial Council.

While collected together before the altars for the last time, they paid the grateful tribute of their solemn thanksgiving to God, for the happy close of their labours, and prostrate in the sanctuary of Mary, they, with one voice and with intense love, invoked the Immaculate Virgin, Patroness of the Metropolis and of

the whole Province, and besought her with fervour, that she would, under her powerful protection, shield themselves and the faithful committed to their charge, they even then experienced the anxious desire of manifesting to you the result of their labours, for the sanctification of your souls.

But a pious duty claimed their first care and attention. Though the Bishops are shepherds with respect to the people, they are still the sheep of the flock with respect to Peter. "If they have been established bishops to rule the Church of God,"⁽¹⁾ they are also the dutiful and respectful children of the August Head of the Universal Church, whom Jesus-Christ has constituted his vicar on earth, and to whom he said in the person of Peter: "Feed my Sheep."⁽²⁾ The filial submission, the respectful obedience they owe to this supreme Head, to whom the Son of God said: "Confirm thy brethren,"⁽³⁾ imposed on them the duty of laying at his feet and submitting to his judgment, the decrees of their Council. This obligation they hastened to fulfill, and they have awaited the confirmatory answer in a religious silence.

(1) Act. Apost.
20-28.

(2) S. John,
21-17.

(3) S. Luke,
22-32.

At length the answer has come to hand from Rome; these decrees are now clothed with the high sanction of the Head of the Church; approved and confirmed by the supreme authority, they are become so many holy regulations which we are bound to receive with respectful submission; so many salutary laws, which now only require publicity, and which we are bound to promulgate without loss of time.

We therefore publish them to day, and while presenting them to you and entrusting them to your study and meditation, we confidently hope that by you they will be received with the feelings of dutiful children, who are apprised of the wishes and intentions of a beloved parent.

In our heart, therefore, we cherish the fond hope that the Bishops of this Province shall not have, in your behalf, laboured in vain in their holy assembly; and that you will faithfully observe all whatsoever they have been inspired by God to teach you, and to order you to perform, in those decrees, so as to promote the glory of His name, the sanctification of your souls and your happiness in time and eternity.

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Yes, D. B. B., as it always and invariably is the case, your personal interests and your happiness were the sole end and object of the labours of the Bishops, in the second Provincial Council. For they are not Bishops for their own sakes, but for the sake of the people entrusted to their solicitude. If prostrate between the vestibule and the altar, they pour forth their tears and their prayers, in the presence of the Sovereign Pastor of Souls, it is in your behalf and for the salvation of their people; if they betake themselves to serious labour, amidst the silence of meditation and study, it is for the salvation of their people; if following the example of the good Shepherd, they travel through town and country, it is in the interests of the sanctification of their people, it is to bring back to the fold, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel,"⁽¹⁾ and to confirm by the gift of the Holy Ghost those who are yet weak in the Faith; if they impose hands on the young Levites, if they consecrate the Priests of the Lord, if they give them the mission of labour in the Holy Ministry, it is for the salvation of their people. Thus they live not for themselves, but for their people; they belong not to themselves, but to their people; their whole life is spent in the service and consecrated to the happiness of their people. It is therefore under the influence of the holy thought of your salvation that they assembled together in Council; under the inspiration of this thought, they directed the aim of their labours, and framed the subject matter of their decrees.

⁽¹⁾ S. Matth.
10-16.

These decrees have reference to Faith, to the Sacraments, to the life and obligations of the clergy, and to the holiness of the judicial oath.

Faith is the foundation of Salvation. "Without Faith it is impossible to please God."⁽²⁾ To be actuated by Faith, it is necessary to hear the Church; to the Church, the Son of God promised to teach all truth, and by her alone can it be taught; and, nevertheless, the world seems to be possessed by a spirit of pride and revolt against the divine authority of the Church, the world is distracted by a spirit of error and insane infatuation, which hurries it forward, towards the gloomy regions of doubt and infidelity: the world is full of vain, haughty egotists, who despising her divine teaching, and seeking for truth outside of her pale, pretend to find it in the depths of their ignorance and of their pride. The world is full of arrogant, presumptuous spirits, who puffed up with the haughty science of a false philosophy,

⁽²⁾ Hebr., 11-6.

assume the position of masters of the world, which they pretend to enlighten, and boldly expound the dreamy speculations of their insane reason and the impieties of their vain theories, as so many truths calculated to regenerate human nature. And the spirit of darkness has hurled forth on the world legions of heretics, impostors, false doctors and seducers, who wage a cruel war against the Church of God; who never weary nor rest, in their violent efforts to weaken, to corrupt and to extinguish faith in the hearts of her children, to seduce souls and draw them down with themselves into the gulf of perdition. And hell has spewed forth on earth, through their impious mouths, an awful deluge of errors, impieties and blasphemies, which "might seduce the elect themselves if it were possible;"¹ these multiplied efforts of hell and of its agents, these accumulated iniquities and means of seduction have caused the charity of many to wax cold, and have weakened faith throughout the world, and even now we seem to be drawing nigh to those days of woe and dissolution, foretold by the Saviour of the world, in these words:

(1) S. Matth.,
24-25.

(2) S. Luke,
18-8.

"When the son of man cometh, shall he find, think you, faith on earth."² This is the great scandal of our age, these are the innumerable dangers which threaten your faith; and you dwell in the midst of these scandals, in the midst of men without faith, unbelievers, impostors, blasphemers, heretics, seducers, enemies of your faith and of your religion: you are surrounded by them, they penetrate, they intrude into the bosom of your families, and force their presence into the midst of your society.

Could the Fathers of the second Provincial Council have remained silent at, or unmoved by the spectacle of the trying ordeal to which your faith is exposed? After they had bewailed and deplored the evil, were they not bound, in duty, to raise their voice to denounce it, and warn you against the danger of seduction? This duty they also performed by their first decree, with the full authority with which they are invested, as Bishops established by God, sentries on the vanguard of the armies of the Church to watch over the precious deposit of Faith. After having themselves, with their tongues and hearts, solemnly confessed the divine faith, they propose it to your belief, in the same terms in which it was defined by the General Councils, in which it is preserved in the Catholic Creed, and in which you should hold and believe it in order to be saved: afterwards,

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to forewarn you against the danger of being seduced by the enemies of truth, they condemn their impious theories, and with all the fervency of their zeal, censure and stigmatize the principal errors which are current in our times.

O, dearly beloved Brethren, we beseech you by the love you cherish for your eternal salvation, by the value you put on it, hold fast to that catholic faith, which is a priceless gift of God, to that faith which you inherited from your fathers; which is for you, as it was for them, the grounds of your hope, which alone can guide you, as it guided them, to happiness in the present as well as in the future life. Preserve it as the most precious of treasures, as your very soul, at the peril of your fortunes, nay at the peril of life itself: ad here firmly to "the pillar of truth," ^{(1) First Ti. moth. 2-14.} the Catholic Church, its depository and infallible guardian; ^{(2) First Ti. moth. 2-14.} hearken to that only Church of God, with whom Jesus has promised to remain to the end of the world; hearken also and obey, with religious fidelity, the pastors whom God has appointed over you, to teach you and to lead you in the ways of salvation; and fly from the presence of their treacherous men, who teach a doctrine different from that of the Church, as if there could be any other Gospel than the one Jesus-Christ gave to his Church, with the positive command to teach it to every creature, until the consummation of the world; shun them, as heretics as corrupters of the faith, as impious seducers, as the sworn enemies of your souls, banish from your houses all their books, as being infected with the deadly poison of their errors, which they offer you with the sole intention of corrupting your faith, of seducing you and of securing your perdition. Yes! D. B. B., we repeat it, if you prize your own salvation and that of your families; if you love your salvation and that of your children; detest those heretical books, as well as those which an infidel and irreligious press belches forth, with a hell-born energy throughout the whole world: shun them, reject them, cast them away far from yourselves and from your families; give them no admission into your homes.

In the order of the matters treated by the Council, as in the order of salvation, the sacraments follow Faith.

Faith disposes the soul to its union with God, and it is by the means of the sacraments that this holy union is perfected and consummated. Faith is the principle, the foundation and root of justification, "and it is by the sacraments that all

(1) Conc. Tren.
Sess. 6. De
Sacram.

true justice begins, increases, and is renewed in the souls."¹ It is by sanctifying grace, the fruit of the passion and of the merits of Jesus Christ, that every soul is regenerated, justified, sanctified, and that its union with God is consummated, and this grace, the sacraments communicate. Nothing then can be more holy, more august, more salutary than the sacraments, which Jesus-Christ has bequeathed to his Church, as so many fountains of grace and life, for the salvation of mankind.

What subject could more worthily engage the attention of God's Pontiffs intrusted with the honor of his worship and the interests of his glory, whom he has established pastors in his Church, to keep watch and ward over the salvation

(2) Heb. 13-17

of the faithful, "as being to render an account of their souls!"² The profanation of the sacraments is an insult directed against God himself: it is a sacrilege. The sources of life and grace are perverted into sources of malediction and death, with respect to those who desecrate them.

(3) 1. Corinth
8-1

Hence, the Fathers of the Council, glowing with an ardent zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of your souls, deemed it a duty incumbent on them, to remind the priests, established to be "the ministers of Jesus-Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God,"³ with what deep feelings of religion and piety, and with what angelic purity, they should administer the sacraments; with what zeal they should labour, to dispose the faithful for their worthy reception; with what saintly ardour they should devote themselves to administer them, for the salvation of souls; with what careful precision and religious attention; in fine, they should observe the holy rubrics, prescribed by the Church for their administration, in order to discharge, in a manner worthy of God, the duties of their sublime and awful ministry.

But while addressing these serious admonitions to the ministers of the sacraments, you, D. B. B., were present to the thoughts of the Bishops: for it is in your behalf that they are charged to administer them. With the charity they entertain for you, could they forget to offer you also some instructions on so important a subject? Could they feel themselves dispensed from reminding you of the holiness of the Sacraments; with what care you ought to prepare for their reception; what dispositions should accompany so holy an action, what dread you

should have of profanation, with what ardour in fine you should pant for these sources of life; what happiness is enjoyed in their frequent and worthy reception; what woeful misery is entailed, by receiving them unworthily, or wilfully forsaking and withdrawing from them.

Give ear, D. B. B., to the charitable admonitions of your pastors: hearken to their paternal exhortations: listen to their wails and lamentations over the criminal indifference of so many impenitent Christians, who neglect the reception of the sacraments. Oh! you also, have pity on your souls! O children of Israel, why will you obstinately persist in perishing, while salvation is at hand! Why would you die, while the sources of eternal salvation are nigh? Frequently then approach to the sacraments, come then frequently and confidently, to wash, to purify, to heal yourselves in the saving waters of penance. Come often and always with ardour, with delight, and nourish your souls with the bread of life, in the heavenly banquet of the Holy Eucharist, which the love of the Son of God has prepared for you, to which he welcomes and invites you with so much charity.

In the decree treating of the life and duties of priests, the Fathers of the Council expose their respective duties towards God, towards themselves and towards those whose salvation is entrusted to them; the virtues and good works they should practice; the examples they should give, and lastly, all the rules to discipline they should observe, to attain the degree of sanctity to which they are called.

The Priests should be holy, because they are consecrated to God; because God, whose ministers and representatives they are, is holy; because the sacrifice they offer to them, is holy; because the things of which they are the dispensers, are holy.

"For, D. B. B., all things are yours" ⁽¹⁾ in the Church of God, and ⁽²⁾ there for your sake; the Bishops are yours and are established for your sake; the sacraments are for your benefit; the Priests are also for your advantage. It is in your behalf that they are Priests, that they are separated from other men "and appointed in the things that appertain to God:" ⁽³⁾ in your behalf they offer sacrifices, and are ministers of Jesus-Christ; it is for your sake that he has conferred on them his extraordinary powers, that He has confided to them the dis-

(1) Cor. 3-22

(2) Heb. 5-1

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pensation of his mysteries: and for your sake and on your account they must be holy. Undoubtedly also their virtues and their sanctity constitute your happiness. When God wishes to shew mercy to his people and to save them, He sends them Holy Priests; and when He wishes to display his wrath and to destroy them, He sends them bad and unworthy Priests.

You will understand, D. B. B., that the zeal of the Bishops, with respect to the sanctity of the Clergy, has your happiness for its object; you will acknowledge that you cannot be indifferent, with regard to the paternal instructions they here address to the Priests, since you are to participate in the precious fruits resulting therefrom; and you will join with us in praying the Father of Mercies, that He may send you Holy Priests, filled with grace and knowledge, duly qualified to edify you by the sanctity of their life and the efficacy of their exhortations.

The Church, being a visible Society, certainly enjoys the right of possession and does actually hold temporal property. She possesses her temples, her ministers, her worship, and needs pecuniary resources to maintain them. Property, and all other funds whatsoever, consecrated to this end, appertain to God and essentially constitute the domain of religion. The Church, being sovereign and independent of any and every power on earth, with regard to all that relates to religion, must of necessity enjoy the free administration of her temporal property.

To pretend that the administration of Church-property should be subject to the civil authority and belong to the laity, would be to assert an erroneous doctrine, contrary to the liberty of the Church and destructive of her imprescriptible rights; as if the Church, in the things of God, should be the slave of the temporal power, and the handmaid of those whom she calls her children and who acknowledge her for their mother.

In our time, however, this serious error does not fail to meet with defenders, even amongst Catholics; and it is a fact which a woeful experience has more than once demonstrated, that the minds of our people have been deeply and insidiously imbued with this error, under the guide of certain ideas of independence and democracy, which it is attempted to instil and extend into the domain and province of religion.

It was important to check the progress of this dangerous error, and this the bishops intended to do, by their solemn declaration, in conformity with the constitutions of the Sovereign Pontiff and the decisions of councils, that Church-property, being of the order of things consecrated to the worship of God, belongs to God, and is thereby under the power and jurisdiction of the Church. Hence it follows that the administrators of Church-property are merely the stewards of the Church, that it is from her they hold their right of administration, and that they are therefore bound to administer her property in accordance with the regulations and intentions of the Church. Nor can they ever divert them to any other object, without the permission of the Bishop, who represents her in his Diocese.

Such are the momentous decisions, issued forth by the decree relating to ecclesiastical property; these decisions should serve you for a rule and a law, to direct you in regard to the administration and destination of Church-property, from which you cannot deviate under pain of disobedience to the Church.

"The name of God is holy and terrible;"¹ it should never be pronounced ^{1) Pa. 110} without the highest reverence: to take it in vain is a crime, and woe to the man who profanes it. Nevertheless, unworthy Christians are daily to be met with, who unmindful of the fear of God, for the sake of a vile interest, dare to profane his adorable name by rash, unjust, or false oaths; even lately, some incited by their pride and ambition, amidst the fury of the elections, have given vent to their impiety in the following words of blasphemy: "Fear not to resort to falsehood and perjury; mind not the priests who forbid you: God does not see you, nor does he hear you; during election-time you are free and independant of all control on the part of God or men; you may do what you please, God will not call you to account, nor will he punish you!" Finally, during these days of rioting and excess, many have been seen, who, being seduced by such infernal advice or blinded by their passions, formed for themselves a false conscience, and believing their convictions, persuaded themselves that they could swear against truth, to assert their right to vote; and those men were not afraid to make use of the adorable name of God, to confirm a falsehood, and have committed this horrible crime without remorse.

While the echoes of these blasphemies and perjuries were still resounding

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in their ears, while the scenes of scandal were yet present to their view, could the Bishops, your Pastors, who are to give an account for your souls, could they remain silent? Where they not obliged to raise their voice in the name of Religion, to remind you of the sanctity of an attestation under oath, to declare to you solemnly, as they did in their decree, that, under all circumstances and pretences whatsoever, an appeal to the holy name of God, for the purpose of making rash, unjust, or false oaths, is an enormous insult offered up to the divine majesty and a detestable crime.

Let you, D. B. B., deeply imprint in your hearts the solemn admonitions addressed to you by the Fathers of the Second Council. Fear God, respect his holy name; tremble at the thoughts of profaning it by perjury, and thereby drawing down on you the chastisement of his wrath.

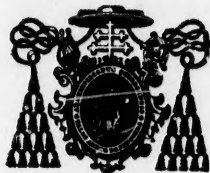
Such is the faith and substance of the decrees of the Second Council, which, for your edification and instruction, we deemed ourselves obliged to make known to you; such is the result of the labours of the bishops of this Province, which they began under the influence of the Holy Ghost, which they prosecuted under the invocation of Mary, in their holy sessions, and which they crowned by an ardent prayer to the Queen of Angels, imploring her to extend her powerful protection over their own persons and their dioceses, over their own souls and yours; invoking her, even then, as the Patroness of this metropolis and of the Province, under the beautiful title of Virgin conceived without sin; title so cherished in your hearts, under which you to-day invoke her with delight, love and confidence; glorious title which heaven has lately revealed to earth and under which we, with the whole Church of God, will henceforth invoke her, repeating incessantly with renewed love and fervor: *Regina sine labe concepta, ora pro nobis*, Queen conceived without sin, pray for us, Amen.

This our pastoral Letter shall be read and proclaimed at the prone of all churches, parochial chapels, or other places of public worship, as also in chapter in all religious houses, on the first Sunday after its reception.

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Given at the Archbishop's Palace, under our hand, the seal of the diocese and the signature of our Secretary, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, december the eighth, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-five.



† C. F. BISHOP OF TLOA,
Administrator.

By His Lordship's command,

EDMOND LANGEVIN, Pst.,
Secretary.